

The Potential Impact of Disruptive Political Events and Welcome to the December 2016 PMWJ

David Pells, Managing Editor

Welcome to the December 2016 edition of the **PM World Journal** (PMWJ). This 53rd edition continues to reflect the international nature of this publication; **24** original articles, papers and other works by **27** different authors in **15** different countries are included this month. News articles about projects and project management around the world are also included. Since the primary mission of this journal is to support the global sharing of knowledge, please share this month's edition with others in your network, wherever in the world they may be.

Since August I have been using this opportunity to mention new trends or important issues that I see as journal editor. This month I return to an issue that I first explored in 1998 in a paper for that year's PMI congress; the paper was titled "[Global Tides of Change: Significant Recent Events Affecting Globalization of the Project Management Profession](#)". I presented an update to that paper in South Africa in 1999, then touched on the topic again in a June 2009 article on "[Global Business Intelligence for Managers of Programs, Projects and Project-oriented Organizations](#)" which I also presented at an IPMA conference in Finland. I returned to the topic in earnest in a September 2009 editorial titled "[Disruptive Events: Are you, your project or your organization prepared?](#)" This was also the topic of a keynote presentation that I delivered at the PM South Africa conference in 2010. Because of recent unexpected but dramatic political events in the UK and USA, it's time to return to the subject of...

The Potential Impact of Disruptive Political Events

In the papers referenced above, significant political events are only one of several categories of disruptive change that can impact programs, projects, organizations and project managers. The categories that I previously studied include extreme weather and natural disasters, manmade disasters, human health and social factors (i.e. pandemics), economic disruptions (i.e. 2008 global financial meltdown), disruptive political or governmental changes, international geo-political events (i.e. wars, disputes), disruptive technology developments, industry or market disruptions, and legal/regulatory changes. Of course, this last category is often directly related to political changes, but not always. A new law can be quite disruptive. Disruptive events in any of these categories should be considered during the risk planning process by many teams and organizations.

The thing about political changes though is, they can often be seen coming. Elections happen on a regular basis, with the outcomes having measurable probabilities. Nevertheless, many organizations and leaders do not factor such risks

into their programs or projects. This is a mistake, as some political changes can be quite unexpected and very disruptive.

Which brings us to today's world. What was the impact of the "Brexit" vote in the UK to leave the European Union on 23 June 2016? Who saw it coming, or the subsequent fall in the value of the Pound? What was the immediate and long term impact on investment in projects in the UK or projects outside UK by British organizations? Which companies factored these potential outcomes into their risk management plans and took appropriate mitigation actions?

What was the impact of Donald Trump's election to the U.S. Presidency on 8 November 2016? Which industries or organizations may benefit or suffer? What will be the impact on regulations, federal government agency policies and structures, federally-funded programs and projects? It seems clear to me that the Trump election may in fact be very disruptive, not only in the U.S. but in many other countries where U.S. organizations have influence. It is still early in the transition process, but opportunities and threats are already visible. There will be winners (oil & gas, power plants, financial services, military, property developers) and most likely losers (renewable energy, healthcare, outsourcing, public education, among others).

What will be the impact on organizations and projects in Brazil or South Korea if their presidents are impeached in coming weeks, as now appears likely? What will be the impact of presidential elections in France on 23 April 2017 or in Germany later in the year? If existing leaders are ousted, then there will be major changes, and those changes will impact many industries, organizations, programs and projects. How are those threats and opportunities being factored into risk plans?

What will happen in Cuba since Fidel Castro died on 25 November 2016 at the age of 90? While it might not happen immediately, his death will most likely affect investment in Cuba, regulations, foreign trade, access to modern electronics and technologies, and other factors in tourism, building, energy, agriculture and other industries. The impact of Castro's death is probably already being felt by every program, project and project manager in Cuba.

What will happen in Zimbabwe when Robert Mugabe dies? Perhaps it will be similar as in Cuba, but Zimbabwe seems in worse shape economically than Cuba. The impact could be even more dramatic. What if another world leader suddenly passes? Unlike elections, the death of political leaders is less predictable; nevertheless, everyone dies, so planning for such disruptive political changes in many places seems wise.

Another point, if we work in service organizations where our projects are performed under contracts to others, we need to consider the impact of disruptive changes on our customers, not just our own organizations. Impacts of political changes can be either indirect (from changes to policies, regulations, leadership) or direct (federal budgets for programs or organizations such as defense, energy, infrastructure, IT).

Obviously, I cannot mention every possible recent or future political change. There are elections held around the world each year that impact organizations and projects

in those countries, and often with international repercussions. But it should be obvious to everyone in the PM field that more risk planning should consider the impact of significant disruptive changes – and political changes like those we have seen this year in America and Britain are good examples. Regardless of our personal political opinions (or votes), we need to factor significant potentially-disruptive political events (and changes), including state and local political changes, into our program and project risk planning.

This month in the Journal

Now for this month's journal which again contains some interesting and outstanding works. Six featured papers are included this month. Alan Stretton has contributed another good paper, sharing his decades of experience and knowledge about adding value for project clients. Two papers are included by professors in Egypt and Saudi Arabia; Mark Reeson who is also working in Saudi Arabia has contributed a paper about a successful city development there; a good paper by Mohammed El Rashid in Sudan is included; and Paul Giammalvo in Jakarta has updated results of his globally-recognized "project management certification benchmarking research." These are all excellent contributions to the P/PM literature.

Three series articles are again included this month, along with two advisory articles and two short commentary articles. These articles are all by experienced project management experts and practitioners who share experience and knowledge with our readers. I hope they are useful.

The three second edition papers included this month include the first paper ever presented at a PMI event in 1969 by Russell Archibald, a very good one from the 2011 UT Dallas PM Symposium, and a 2008 paper by me on the future of project management in the earth sciences fields.

Interesting regional reports are also included from Jouko Vaskimo in Helsinki, Cecilia Boggi in Buenos Aires, Alfonso Bucero in Madrid and Miles Shepherd in Salisbury. Jouko has also contributed a special report from the recent ISO TC258 committee meeting in Athens. One interesting book review is also included. All of the articles, papers, reports and reviews this month contribute to the global project management body of knowledge. Please read those of interest to you, then share them with others. Sharing knowledge multiplies the impact of good ideas, and some ideas (like projects) can change the world.

Share Your Experience, Research and Knowledge

We invite you to share your own experience, knowledge or research results related to program and project management. A wide variety of original works are included in the PMWJ each month. Share knowledge and gain visibility for yourself and your organization; publish a paper or article in the PMWJ. See our [Calls for Papers](#) and review the [Author Guidelines](#) for the journal. Then just email your original work to editor@peworldjournal.net. The PMWJ is not a refereed journal; however we can publish your work quickly (for sharing with thousands of readers around the world and for immediate reference). The PMWJ is also indexed by EBSCO, which means

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Share it forward

If you found something interesting in the PMWJ this month, please **SHARE IT FORWARD** - send the link to colleagues, co-workers or friends. If you have knowledge or a story to share, submit an article or paper for publication. We are especially interested in those that contribute to solving global problems. Thank you for reading this month’s edition of the PMWJ, have a great December and good luck with your projects!

About the Author



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David L. Pells is Managing Editor of the ***PM World Journal*** (www.pmworldjournal.net) and Managing Director of the PM World Library (www.pmworldlibrary.net). David is an internationally recognized leader in the field of professional project management with more than 35 years of experience on a variety of programs and projects, including engineering, construction, energy, defense, transit, technology and nuclear security, and project sizes ranging from thousands to billions of dollars. He has been an active professional leader in the United States since the 1980s, serving on the board of directors of the Project Management Institute (PMI®) twice. He was founder and chair of the Global Project Management Forum (1995-2000), an annual meeting of leaders of PM associations from around the world.

David was awarded PMI's Person of the Year award in 1998 and Fellow Award, PMI's highest honor, in 1999. He is also an Honorary Fellow of the Association for Project Management (APM) in the UK; Project Management Associates (PMA - India); and Russian Project Management Association. Since 2010 he is an honorary member of the Project Management Association of Nepal. From June 2006 until March 2012, he was the managing editor of *PM World Today*. He occasionally provides high level advisory services for major programs, global organizations and the U.S. federal government. David has a BA in Business Administration from the University of Washington and a Master's degree in business from Idaho State University in the USA. He has published widely, spoken at conferences and events worldwide, and can be contacted at editor@pmworldjournal.net.